National Park Service Centennial 1916–2016

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The National Park Service in the Next 100 Years

DO NOT LET THE SERVICE BECOME JUST ANOTHER EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT BUREAU; KEEP IT YOUTHFUL, VIGOROUS, CLEAN, AND STRONG.

—NPS Director Horace M. Albright, 1933

In 1916 Congress created the National Park Service to oversee America's beloved places. While the first century has focused on the agency's dual mission of stewardship and enjoyment, its reach now extends across geographical and cultural frontiers—far beyond the original notion of a "park." Besides the 400-plus parks in the National Park System, the NPS oversees national trails, national heritage areas, wild and scenic rivers, and many other places and programs. We spearhead learning initiatives, help communities preserve their distinct heritage, share our expertise across international boundaries, adapt to the evolving needs of our visitors and partners, conduct scientific research, and protect the public.

As America's story changes, so do the ways it is told. Today's parks are about everything from atomic bombs to zooplankton, from Ice Age migrations to 21st century immigration. Below is a brief description of our growth and evolution over the first 100 years, along with a look at the many paths forward.

DENALI, *LEFT*—NPS / PATRICK GREGERSON; SAN JUAN, *RIGHT*—© MICHAEL SHARP; WOMAN WITH RED CAP, *BELOW*—NPS / KIRKE WRENCH
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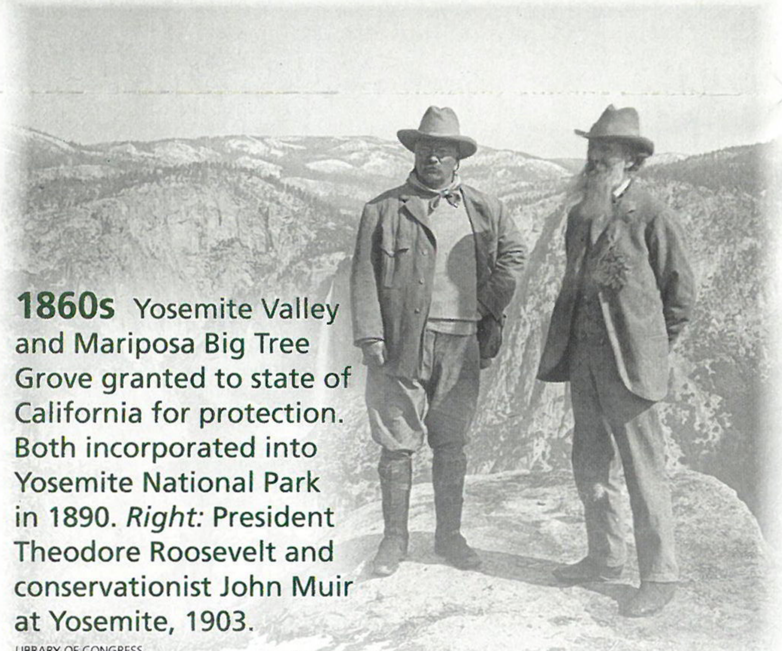
Shaping the National Park System



1860s Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove granted to state of California for protection. Both incorporated into Yosemite National Park in 1890. *Right:* President Theodore Roosevelt and conservationist John Muir at Yosemite, 1903.

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1920s George Melendez Wright *(below)*, first chief of NPS wildlife division, begins formal studies of wild species, especially those endangered. Today George Wright Society continues his holistic view of park management.

COURTESY GEORGE WRIGHT SOCIETY

1930s War Department's parks and monuments and Forest Service's national monuments transferred to NPS management. Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration *(above)* build roads, trails, and visitor centers in national and state parks.

TOP LEFT—GERALD WILLIAMS COLLECTION, OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY; *TOP RIGHT*—NATIONAL ARCHIVES

1960s Wilderness Act and other federal laws strengthen protection of wild lands, preserve historic sites, and create systems to manage wild rivers and trails like the Appalachian Trail *(below)*.

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1970s Endangered Species Act requires federal agencies to protect endangered plants and animals. Legislation promotes role of science in park management.

I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.—John Muir

1870s Yellowstone established in 1872, world's first national park. More national parks soon follow.

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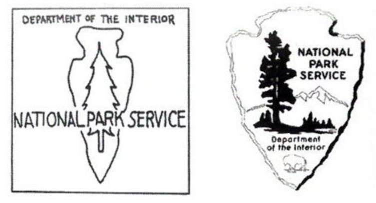
1900s Antiquities Act authorizes presidents to set aside federal lands as national monuments.

1916 August 25: Organic Act creates National Park Service and places existing parks and monuments under its oversight. First NPS director is businessman and conservationist Stephen T. Mather *(left)*.

1950s NPS embarks on "Mission 66" initiative to upgrade facilities, staffing, and resource management by agency's 50th anniversary. NPS adds lakeshores, seashores, trails, recreational areas, and historic sites like Thomas Edison's home *(below)*.



Arrowhead sketch is the basis for the familiar NPS insignia, first used in 1952.

Totem pole from Sitka National Historical Park.

© PATRICK ENDRES / ALASKAPHOTOGRAPHICS

1980s Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) protects over 104 million acres of federal lands, including 47 million acres in National Park System.

1990s NPS approaches new millennium, focusing on resource protection, accessibility, leadership in education and scientific research, professionalism, and partnerships.

2016 National Park Service celebrates centennial and charts course for the second century.

Reaching Beyond Park Boundaries

GET CONNECTED Parks tell America's story and connect us to our history, our environment, ourselves, and each other. Like a thread in a giant tapestry, each of our individual stories contributes to the American narrative. *Below:* Women at the National Park of American Samoa celebrate the anniversary of the US territory.

PLANET HEALTH National parks are critical to protecting Earth. Many parks protect endangered species or vestiges of intact ecosystems. As such, they are valuable research laboratories. The NPS works with the worldwide scientific and conservation community to study air and water quality, climate changes, migratory species, and other issues. *Left:* Volunteer "citizen scientists" at Gates of the Arctic National Park.

PLACES OF HEALING Parks promote mental, physical, and spiritual health. Outdoor places help restore us physically, emotionally, creatively, and spiritually. By linking people to nature and to one another, parks inspire healthier choices and help build more vibrant communities. *Above:* Kayakers at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS The NPS is a valued leader in formal and informal education. You're never too young or too old to learn something new. National Parks are the ideal extensions of traditional classrooms, offering active, inclusive, transformative experiences. *Below:* Ranger and students at Everglades National Park.

YOURS, MINE, AND OURS National parks reveal a comprehensive national identity. Parks interpret and commemorate pivotal movements and moments in the nation's diverse cultural history. This offers everyone a more complete understanding of our past and present, and guides us toward an inclusive future. *Above:* Color guard representing the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail.

GET INSPIRED National Parks enliven the human spirit. In the late 1800s, America's spectacular wild places inspired a movement to preserve these treasures for future generations. We are that future. Along with the gift of the national parks comes the responsibility to preserve them for those who follow. *Left:* Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve.

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